

Value of a Captive

understand. It was brief—unusually so—and terminated⁷²⁷
without any damage, very much to my relief. ⁶³⁵

After the ceremony, I was conducted to the tent of one⁷²⁷
of the Spotted Leopard's wives, of whom he also had four.⁵⁷⁴
This was especially appropriated to the accommodation of
Big Wolf, and inasmuch as I had always slept in the same
tent with him at home, he did not think proper to alter
the programme on this occasion.

In the morning, a large number of mules and horses were⁷²⁷
collected in the square, driven in from the surrounding ⁴²⁵
pasture by the women. Piles of buffalo, deer, and beaver
skins, also, were brought from the tents and packed on
mules. I was then brought out by Big Wolf, who produced
the bloody stick and delivered it to the Spotted Leopard,
at the same time informing me I had been sold and assigned.
To render the transfer legal, however, it became incumbent
on me to reopen the vein on the back of my hand, and
again stain the carved figures with blood, an act which, in
view of the alternative of being butchered, I performed
with great alacrity. This formality closed the bargain, when
Big Wolf and his warriors departed, taking with them the
avails of the sale. In this business transaction, I had the
satisfaction of learning how much, in Indian estimation,
I was worth, to wit: 120 animals, old and young, of the
horse kind, and as many skins as three pack mules could^[435] ●
carry.

From the first I entertained an inveterate dislike of the⁷²⁷
Spotted Leopard. He was morose, reserved, unsocial, and ⁶²²
there was a malignant expression about his mouth and eyes
that told me as plainly as if it had been written in emphatic
English on his forehead that he was a being who would
delight in cruelty. These were my first impressions of him,
and I never had occasion to modify them afterwards. But

The Comanches

276 Comanche pipes were made of bone, stone, or wood by both men and women. Many of the early pipes were straight tubes made of bone from the shank of a deer or an antelope, cut off at either end, the marrow punched out, and the mouth end pared down and smoothed. Before being used, such a pipe was commonly wrapped with the ligament from the back of a buffalo bull's neck, and this, when dried, made so complete a reinforcement of the bone that the pipe might last a long time. The straight bone pipes were easier to carry than the more bulky and elaborate stemmed pipes, and were therefore taken on expeditions. They were both long and short, and were called *omotay*. Such pipes were also used by the Kiowas and Cheyennes.⁴

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324 According to white captives, the stone pipe was most commonly used in later times. Stone pipes were made of soft stone, either white soapstone or red sandstone. Soapstone is easy to fashion, is found in various sections of the Comanche country, and answers as well as clay or meerscham. The Comanche stone pipe bowl was made with a vertical cylinder on a flat base that projected forward and back from the bowl. This spur beyond the bowl allowed the smoker to grip the bowl without burning his hands. He had to use a two-handed grip to keep the bowl from falling off the stem, since the two parts of the pipe were not fastened together. Soapstone bowls were usually dyed red or black with a preparation concocted of poke berry and grease or walnut juice. Hard wood was sometimes substituted for stone. Pipes were often artistically engraved and designed, particularly those intended for ceremonial use.

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[462] The manufacturing of weapons and equipment for war and the hunt belonged primarily to the category of man's work. Perhaps the most important article was the bow and arrow. The Comanches made excellent bows, which they used with great skill. A good bow required a long time and much care and labor in construction. The experts were usually the old men who could no longer go to war. [463] According to informants, they had no organization or "guild." The customary present or fee given for an ordinary wooden bow was one horse.⁵

⁴ Informant: Post Oak Jim; see also Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians*, I, 208.

⁵ Informant: Kills Something.

At Work and Play

The modern bows were approximately three feet in length, most 411
of them made of wood, although there were a few sinew-backed or 321
compound ones made of buffalo, elk, or mountain-sheep horn. The
latter were highly finished and required more time to make. They [435] ●
were worth from six to twenty ponies each.*

Not all men made bows in the same way, each workman following the method he thought best. The Comanche country stretched over a wide area, and the best bow materials found in one section might not be available in another. Methods varied with time also. Yet, in general, the process was much the same from the Pecos to the Arkansas and from the Cross Timbers to New Mexico. In making the horn or compound bow, the horns were first thrown into warm water and allowed to remain until they became flexible. They were then straightened and strips of suitable width were cut or sawed. After the strips were filed, shaved, scraped, or rubbed down until the flat sides fitted nicely, the desired length was obtained by overlapping and gluing the ends of from two to four slices. Another piece of horn was then laid on the center at the grasp, where it was glued fast. The whole was then filed or scraped down until it was well proportioned. All the joints were firmly bound with sinew to give resiliency to the bow. Several weeks were required for a skilled workman to make a good, ornamented bow of this type.

Bows were sometimes, though rarely, made of a single piece of horn. A long piece, as nearly straight as possible, was whittled, scraped, and rubbed until it was quite thin. After being made pliable by heating, greasing, and working, it was lashed to a straight stick and left until dry and straight. It was then firmly wrapped with sinew, which was secured in place with glue. Bows of buffalo ribs were sometimes made by the same process. Such bows, however, were of little practical use.

The wooden bow was the common bow of the Comanches. It was 322
made principally from the Osage orange, or bois d'arc. Some Indian 411
tribes called the tree "smooth bow"; the Omahas referred to it as yellowwood, but the French gave it the name *bois d'arc*, by which it is best known. It was plentiful along the Arkansas and Canadian rivers and in the eastern fringe of the Comanche country southward

* Garretson, *op. cit.*, 178.

177 agreements with the cattlemen, and in the summer of 1885
427 received their first grass-lease payments in money.⁴
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But this system of leasing was likewise unsatisfactory. The Indians did not trust the aggressive cattlemen, and within a few years were convinced that their interest could best be protected by having the Washington government handle leases for them. Early in 1892 they named a delegation to present their case to the authorities in Washington. As a result, the agent was notified to submit one-year lease contracts for approval. Six leases, totaling 250,580 acres, were approved for the year beginning September 1, 1892, and Agent George D. Day reported that by that date he had collected \$69,000 in lease money. Agent Day also reported that with the money he had purchased for the Indians more than one hundred new wagons, lumber for fifty new homes, and a "quantity" of livestock.⁵

177 After the Jerome Agreement was signed on October 6,
427 1892, the cattlemen were eager to lease and joined the Indian opposition to the "Boomer" demand to open the reservation.

[435] In 1893 they leased 1,304,958 acres of the Kiowa-Comanche Reservation at the government price of six cents an acre.⁶

[426] As a result of poor crops and good grass the next year, the agent proposed to spend the semi-annual payment of grass-lease money for young stocker cattle, but the vigorous opposition of the traders, to whom the Indians were in debt, caused him to abandon the plan, with the advice to the Indians that they purchase cattle on their own initiative.

[171] 4. The Kiowas and Kiowa-Apaches for a time refused to accept any grass-lease money for fear that it was a scheme to deprive them of additional lands.—Agent J. Lee Hall, Annual Report, 1886, in Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1886, 131. The annual reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs were printed each year as official United States government documents, usually as both Senate and House documents. Most reports of Indian agents were included. All annual reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs were examined for this study. Reports and correspondence herein cited but found elsewhere than in the official printed documents will be identified.

[123] 5. Agent George D. Day, Annual Report, September 1, 1892, to June, 1893 (Oklahoma Historical Society Library, correspondence files); Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1893, 29. The Kiowa-Comanche Agency supervises the affairs of the Comanches, Kiowas, and the Kiowa-Apaches. In most cases the records make no distinction as to tribe, and it is not always possible to give a breakdown of data on a tribal basis. Consequently, statistical data in this article are for the entire agency except when otherwise noted or clearly obvious.

6. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1893, 29; Wallace and Hovel, op. cit., 349.

After a prolonged controversy, Congress on June 6, 1900, enacted the Jerome Agreement into law, and on July 4, 1901, a presidential proclamation ordered its execution. For the surrendered lands the Indians were to be paid \$2,000,000 in four equal installments whenever the Secretary of the Interior deemed it best for the Indians; the unpaid balance was to draw 5 per cent interest, the interest to be paid annually. The law set aside 480,000 acres for a reserve to be held in common by the tribes. On September 1, 1902, all except 60,000 acres of this reserve had been leased for grazing to the highest bidder at rates ranging from twenty-five cents to two dollars an acre, or for a total of \$132,269.90 for the year.⁷ This was approximately \$36 for each Indian man, woman, and child on the reservation. When the reserve was opened to the "Boomers" in 1906, the Indians were left without any common tribal lands to lease.

The individual allotment lease for agricultural purposes replaced the lease of tribal lands held in common. From the first, this type of land rental has been an important factor in Comanche life. After allotments were assigned, each Indian, with agency approval, could lease his own land. From October 1, 1901, when individual leasing began, until September 1, 1902, the agency approved 443 individual agricultural leases.⁸ White men who leased Indian private land for agricultural purposes were required to make certain improvements on it. Those leasing in 1910 for a term of five years were required to place on each allotment a three-room house, a well, and to fence the land. The three-year lessees were to fence the land and to make certain general repairs. All improvements were to remain on the land when the lease expired, and they became the property of the land owner.⁹

The wisdom of such a policy is not difficult to understand. The Comanches did not know how to build houses or to improve their farms. They had not yet learned the value of

7. Agent James F. Sandlett, Annual Report, September 1, 1902, in Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Annual Report, 1902, pt. 1, 294.
8. *Id.*

9. Superintendent Kiowa-Comanche Agency, Annual Report, September 1, 1910 (Oklahoma Historical Society Library, correspondence files).

WHO WAS MO-CHO-ROOK?

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Sometimes Mo-cho-rook would butcher a steer and bring at least 432 part of it into town to sell. More properly, I should say to let people 231 buy it. The extreme selling effort he made was to pull the tarpaulin back so that you could see the meat if you walked up. He hauled the meat in the back end of a small hack, or spring wagon, and I assume he took home whatever he failed to sell and dried it.

When you showed him the cut you wanted, he waited until you showed him how much money you had; then he would cut your meat, with an apparently very sharp hunting knife that had about an eight-inch blade. He had no scale to weigh your meat, nor did he have anything to wrap it in. You carried your meat to your home in your hand, unless you had the foresight to bring something to wrap it in. He gave you good value for your money. I recall weighing his meat only once, [435] and it ran about five cents a pound. This was about half what a white butcher would have charged you, had there been a white butcher around.

Fresh meat was hard to get. There was no ice for the first two or 000 three years, and a butcher didn't have much leeway in warm weather. Meat had to be sold the first day. We were entirely dependent on people who would bet that they could sell a beef out before it spoiled. Generally speaking, you only got to buy fresh meat on Saturdays, when there were the most people in town.

I was making every effort to gain a working knowledge of the 122 Comanche language, and whenever I had a friendly Indian in the store I would be writing down the names of things and acquiring useful phrases. Several months passed before I had learned enough so 124 that I could ask some of the old fellows about Mo-cho-rook. The young [123] men didn't care to discuss him. It could have been that they felt he was Bad Medicine.

One day I braced an old chap who was in a talking humor. We were in a comfortable spot, and we worried the subject for a couple of hours. He knew about as much English as I knew Comanche. Obviously, much of the vocabulary that I had accumulated around the store was useless in this conversation. Later I was to talk to numerous others, and ultimately an old squaw man helped me to edit, or arrange it properly, in my mind.

I asked my friend, "Oshey-him Mo-cho-rook? He no Comanche." Oshey-him may be translated as "Who is?" "What is?" or "Where is?" according to the way it is used, circumstances, etc. I think the most

WHISKEY NIGHTS



139 ONLY BY A CONSIDERABLE SEARCH could anyone be found in all south-west Oklahoma Territory lower down on the social scale than the man who peddled whiskey to the Comanches. There were reasons for his low rating, even aside from the fact that the peddler was a breaker of both the United States law and the law of the territory of Oklahoma.

177 At the turn of the century, the Comanche warrior was only twenty-
[18] six years from his war trails. Many considered him a savage with only
[273] a superficial veneer of civilization; dangerous when sober, he was doubly feared when drinking.

[157] Nor was it considered sporting to tempt him, as the average old
273 Comanche's resistance was nil. The most cogent argument against selling the Comanche liquor was financial. A dollar spent by the average Comanche family man for liquor meant his family was denied its value in necessities.

● [435] The going price of a pint of cheap whiskey from the Comanche bootlegger was five dollars. This amount would supply a family of
262 five with ample food for a week: a twenty-four-pound sack of flour,
435 four pounds of dry salt bacon, two pounds of good coffee, eight
511 pounds of sugar, ten pounds of good boiling beef (the Comanche seldom fried beef), seventy-five cents for dry onions and assorted

WHISKEY NIGHTS

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vegetables, and seventy-five cents for smoking tobacco and sweets⁵¹¹
for the children. 262
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Most Indian families lived in meager comfort if the head of the household neither drank nor gambled. Of course, Indians who were⁵¹¹ compulsive gamblers lowered their families' standard of living also²⁷⁵ [273]. The gambler's family had a feast-or-famine existence at best.

There is this to be said for gambling money—much of it stayed in the tribe, while money spent for liquor was gone forever. It is easy to understand why decent people deplored the selling of whiskey to these wards of the government.

One recurring incident of Comanche drinking, however, became an amusing interlude to people living close to our store. It occurred in the little inland town of Faxon, Oklahoma Territory, and began immediately after the opening of Comanche land for homesteading in 1901. 273

The old couple involved in the incident have children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren living. Let's call the father of the family Old Warrior. He was one of the better-to-do Indians in worldly goods. He had quite a few horses, a few beef cattle, a good hack, a nearly-new small lumber wagon, and good harness, and the family as a whole owned several stock saddles.

But when Old Warrior and his woman came to town for whiskey they never drove. They would ride double on a little, fat, gentle 492 mare, the kind of mount the Indians termed a squaw horse—meaning a safe horse for anyone to ride. It was on such a mount the little folks [868] learned to ride solo. Instead of a saddle, Mr. and Mrs. Old Warrior rode on a blanket, folded so both could sit on it.

Of course the mount was a dead giveaway, as they only used the 273 little mare when they came for whiskey. Another giveaway was that they would arrive in town near dusk, long past the time they would start for home when driving. The first year or two, when not drinking, they would take a roundabout road home. But on whiskey nights, their errand accomplished, they rode straight for home, point to point across the prairie.

Ordinarily they were a friendly family, and once their other er-609 rands were attended to, they made our store their stopping place. 273 They always tied their horses to our hitchrack, if there was room. But when on a whiskey trip, they left their friendliness at home and never came to our store. Nor did they enter any other place of business.

For some time there was a vacant store building just to the east 273

The wounded were cared for by an army doctor, and the prisoners were fed army rations on the long walk back to Fort Sill. Once they arrived, the prisoners were placed in a guarded prison camp. They were given tents to live in and army blankets to sleep under, and were issued regular army food rations. They fared much better than the Reservation Indians, who were living on the bounty of the Indian Department. Captain Pratt, in his book, *Battlefield and Classroom*, says the Reservation Indians protested strenuously. He wrote letters to Washington, interceding for better supplies for the peaceful Indians. When the warriors were captured, or surrendered, and returned to the post, they found their women and children healthy and well fed.

Wer-que-yah became one of our first Indian customers when we opened our trading store at Old Faxen, Oklahoma Territory. We had the name Wek-wa-a for him, and that is the name under which we carried his account when Dad extended him credit to the next Grass Payment.

Perhaps "Grass Payment" needs some explanation. As soon as Quanah Parker was named chief of the Comanches by the Indian Department, Texas cattlemen began leasing graze from him at ten cents an acre. Mesquite grass and grama grass were the principal grasses. Both are members of the cane family. Tasty and flesh-building when in the growing stage, they store up sugar when matured on the stem. Stock eat and thrive on this ripe grass, and during an open winter will stay in excellent flesh. That is to say, the grasses are a twelve months' graze.

Later, the Indian Department took over the leasing of the grass and raised the price to fifty cents per acre. This lease money was distributed to the Indians on a per capita basis. It was explained to them that this payment differed from the issue of food and clothing they had received from time to time; that was pay for the grass the white man's cows were eating—or Grass Money.

This was language all Indians could understand, and the name caught on. Later, when their land was sold and the interest on their money, held in trust by the government, was distributed twice a year, it remained Grass Money as far as the older Indians were concerned. After food, beeves, and clothing were no longer issued, Grass Money and rent from their allotments were the Indians' only income.